2: Hickinbotham G-4, 5 (ca. 1931-ca. 1957)
1958 MM1 Aden MM1

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504 undeniable fact is that Aden's importance in the past, and important it was, was due as it is today to its magnificent harbour. Curiously enough the harbour was, in bygone days, on the east side of the peninsula in what are now known as Front Bay and Holkat Bay. It was not until the middle of the last century that the present harbour on the west side was surveyed and brought into use as Front Bay gradually silted up and Holkat Bay, never a safe anchorage, was abandoned.

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434 The prosperity and the wealth of Aden as a trading centre
648 has always attracted the envious attention of the rulers of the Yemen be they Himyarites or Sabeans, as they were at the beginning of the Christian era, or Abyssinians, as they were five hundred years later when the Persians in their turn invaded that country, or Turks, as they have been twice during the last thousand years, or just plain Yemenis, as they are today. I do not propose at this stage to consider past and present relations between Aden and the Yemen; they will become apparent as my story unfolds.

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648 The Imams of the Yemen were not alone in their wish to control the destiny of Aden. The Portuguese were the first European nation who attempted to establish themselves in the town. This they did on Easter Day in 1513 when Don Alphonso d' Albuquerque, who had arrived from Goa the previous day with a fleet of twenty ships, landed over a thousand soldiers with scaling ladders to storm the fortifications. The attempt failed, and after a four-day siege, during which Don Alphonso's men succeeded only in capturing an outwork and some thirty or forty pieces of ordnance, the troops were withdrawn and after cannonading the town in a fit of temper Don Alphonso sailed away up the Red Sea.

Three years later the Mameluke Sultan of Egypt sent his Commander, Rais Suleiman, to take the town by assault, but the attempt failed. The fortifications of Aden were so damaged, however, that the Governor was prepared to surrender the place to the Portuguese when they appeared on the scene again later in the same year. They had other preoccupations at the time and refused the offer, only to find later when they again returned that the fortifications had been repaired and the

2: Hickinbotham G-4, 5 (ca. 1931-ca. 1957)
1958 MM1 Aden MM1

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

From the "Upper Circle" 1958

000 TWO years have passed since I left Aden and ceased to take an active part in the South Arabian drama, and much has happened in the Middle East in that comparatively short space of time. I feel, therefore, that this work would not be complete if I did not refer briefly to major events which have directly and indirectly had their effect on both the Colony and the Protectorate. I do so as a spectator far removed from the Arabian stage, and in consequence I may have missed some of the finer points, but the general theme of the play has not been too difficult to follow.

829 This is neither the place nor the time to examine the pros and cons of the action taken by the British Government in conjunction with the French Government following on the seizure in 1956 of the Suez Canal by President Nasser of Egypt. It is the effect of that action on the people of Aden with which I am concerned. At first the landing at Suez surprised and bewildered moderates and extremists in the Colony alike, but when the initial shock had worn off the moderates voiced their disapproval in reasonable language and the extremists made the most of the aggression aspect of the affair and condemned the, to their way of thinking, unprovoked attack upon an Arab country. There were those, but they were very few, who were prepared to say plainly that they hoped our action would result in the downfall of Nasser. But whatever may have been said in public there were many who in private desired our success, though they could not approve the method we had employed.

441 The trading community was gravely disturbed, not so much
• 434 by the possible political consequences of Suez, but by the

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actual effect the closure of the Canal must have on their own business interests. Events showed that they had good reason to be concerned. Shipping fell away rapidly. The monthly average of ships entering the port of Aden for the six months prior to the crisis, that is, from May to October 1956, was 454. In November only 277 ships used the port, and by February 1957 the number was down to 93, the lowest point to be reached. Business throughout the Colony was similarly affected and the trade with passengers, on which the merchants of Steamer Point depend for their livelihood, virtually ceased as all passenger ships were diverted round the Cape.

The finances of the Colony were dealt a blow from which they have yet to recover and behind the immediate and, it was hoped, temporary dislocation of trade, there lurked the fear that the major Shipping Companies having once become accustomed to routing their ships by the Cape to Australia and the Far East, would continue to do so even when the Canal was open once again to world shipping. Mercifully for the Government of Aden and the trading community and all who depended upon them and the port for their living this fear proved to be groundless. Once the Canal was cleared and reopened the volume of shipping returned to normal much earlier than had been expected by the most optimistic.

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The bright side of the picture was that in spite of the divergence of views over Suez, personal relations between Government officials and their Arab friends remained unimpaired. At the same time the example of moderation shown by the local Press, in particular in the English language, was one which even the newspapers in the United Kingdom would have done well to have followed. All newspapers in Aden are Arab or Indian-owned and the two main English language papers are both Arab owned and Arab edited. All the more commendable, therefore, was their restraint during this most difficult period.

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In the Protectorate the reaction was somewhat different. There was satisfaction that Her Majesty's Government had, at last, shown that they were capable of strong and determined action and with it was born a hope in the hearts of the Rulers on the Yemen frontier that it would be the turn of that country

276 435 It is expensive Aden and it has been calculated that Qāt costs the addicts in the Colony £2,500,000 a year.

276 434 The Unofficial Members were not concerned primarily with the effect of the drug on the constitutions of the addicts, but with the economic aspect of the problem. The majority of those who use Qāt are in the lower wage brackets and cannot really afford to buy Qāt without seriously neglecting their family responsibilities. After much careful thought the Asiatic 648 671 Unofficial Members tabled a motion in the Legislative Council at the beginning of 1957 calling on the Aden Government to take action to prohibit the entry of Qāt into the Colony. The motion was not opposed and in due course action was taken 548 and Qāt was prohibited. However, the Aden Government has 648 no control over the States of the Protectorate and the Sultan of Lahej, through whose territory Qāt from the Yemen and from Dhala must pass to reach the Colony, was unwilling to co-operate with the Aden Authorities. Not only did he place no restriction on the movement of Yemen and Dhala Qāt through his territory but he allowed Qāt from Ethiopia, brought by launch and sailing craft from Djibouti in French Somaliland to which place it had been flown from Ethiopia, to be landed on his coast and taken to Dar Saad on the Colony boundary and other places in his territory. The immediate consequence of the Sultan's action was to turn the village of Dar Saad into one vast Qāt chewing den to which resorted all the citizens of Aden who used the stuff and could afford the transport. Why the Sultan did this dis-service to the Colony is hard to say. He may have been unwilling to annoy the Yemen Government, fearing retaliation along his frontier with that country, or he may have thought that action by him to prohibit Qāt from passing through his territory would result in the Imam closing the frontier, as he has done on more than one occasion in the past, with a consequent loss of revenue to the State from road tolls. On the other hand, he may have felt that the order of prohibition was an unjustified infringement of the liberty of the subject to which he could not subscribe, and was not prepared therefore to do anything to interrupt the supply from any source. Whatever were his reasons the result

1 [i.e., Qāt. - Analyst]

5;Gt. Brit., Colonial Office G-8 (1947) 1949 MM1 Aden MM1

foodstuffs available to the public at cheap, and in the case of flour at subsidised, prices. The position of entrepot goods, particularly textiles, fluctuated during the year. At the beginning of the year the position was difficult but supplies of American textiles and later of Japanese and Chinese textiles enabled the merchants to re-establish this trade, which was assisted as much as possible by the ready granting of re-export licences to countries within Aden's economic orbit.

There was an increase in the cost of living during the year though a slight fall occurred latterly. The increase was accounted for mostly by an increase in prices in common articles imported from outside. For instance, rice rose from Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 per paily owing to the imposition of an export tax by the Government of Egypt, and soap increased from 4 annas a cake to 6 annas. It must be borne in mind, however, that the consumption of the various articles which together make up the cost-of-living figures have altered greatly since 1939, consumers switching from one kind of foodstuff to another, depending on supplies available, and spending a smaller proportion of their money on articles, such as clothing, which have so greatly risen in price.

Colony Finances

The Colony opened the financial year on 1st April, 1947, with a surplus balance of about Rs. 190 lakhs. During the year it was estimated that the balance would be increased by another Rs. 13 lakhs. Consequently the surplus balance on 1st April, 1948, should be in the region of Rs. 203 lakhs. This figure is exclusive of Rs. 100 lakhs, which is in the Reserve Fund. The total net assets of the Colony therefore amount to over Rs. 300 lakhs (or £2¼ million sterling).

This is probably the high-water mark of the Colony's surplus. During 1948–49 it is proposed to spend Rs. 23 lakhs more than will be received in revenue. This will reduce the surplus balance at the end of the next financial year to about Rs. 180 lakhs. The deficit in the 1948–49 Budget will arise entirely from the implementation of a part of the Development Programme; in other words, the deficit will be the result of capital expenditure. Revenue still balances recurrent expenditure despite the repeal of the excess profits tax, but the margin is now very small.

Customs and Excise Department

The work of the Department continued on normal lines during 1947, and there was no falling off in the collection of excise duties, which amount to about 15 per cent. of the revenue of the Colony.

Taxes on Income

The collection of revenue from income tax and excess profits tax continued to be satisfactory in spite of heavy excess profits tax refunds made on account of deficiency of profits.

The following legislation was enacted during the year:

(1) The Excess Profits Tax Ordinance No. 9 of 1947, which provides that the tax shall not be chargeable on profit earned after 1st May, 1947.